Alaska Marine Salmon Program **FY2024 Request: $1,150,000**
Reference No: 64777

AP/AL: Appropriation
Project Type: Research / Studies / Planning
Category: Development
Location: Statewide
House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)
Impact House District: Statewide (HD 1-40)
Contact: Sam Rabung
Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2023 - 06/30/2028
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Brief Summary and Statement of Need:
Many systems in Alaska are experiencing poor returns of salmon. In addition, marine fish species are showing lower rates of productivity while many species of marine mammals have proliferated. In combination, this points to poor marine survival attributed to changing ocean conditions. The department cannot tackle these issues alone and it is critical to be able to participate in national and international marine research efforts in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.

Funding:	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026	FY2027	FY2028	FY2029	Total
1004 Gen Fund	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$1,150,000		$5,750,000
Total:	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$1,150,000	$0	$5,750,000

☐ State Match Required ☐ One-Time Project ☐ Phased - new ☑ Phased - underway ☐ Ongoing
0% = Minimum State Match % Required ☐ Amendment ☐ Mental Health Bill

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	Amount	Staff
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	
Totals:	0	0

Prior Funding History / Additional Information:
Sec11 Ch11 SLA2022 P89 L27 HB281 $1,150,000

Project Description/Justification:
1. Core program
Cost: $250,000 Annually

A core marine salmon research program will include the staffing necessary to support basic statewide research and analysis, inclusive of four months of Fisheries Scientist 1 (FS1) salary with remaining months covered under general funds; six months of Fishery Biologist 2 (FB2) salary, with an additional six months covered by external funding; and one month of Biometrician 3 salary. An additional month of sea duty pay for each of the FS1 and FB2 will support ability to participate in field research at sea. Additional funds will support travel for the FS1 and FB2, supplies, replacement, or repair of field collection equipment (e.g., trawl nets), and equipment purchase necessary for laboratory analyses (e.g., genetics, otoliths, and stomach content).

2. Support existing long-standing research programs: Northern Bering Sea Juvenile Salmon Survey (NBS) and Southeast Alaska Coastal Monitoring Program (SECM).

Cost: $100,000 Annually

These programs have proven valuable for providing forecasting tools used in management and contributing to understanding factors driving survival and productivity at different life stages for Yukon River Chinook salmon and Southeast Alaska Pink salmon. Both programs have currently untapped capacity to provide usable products for other regional salmon species as well (e.g., Western Alaska chum, Southeast Alaska Chinook). Both programs are largely funded with soft monies and in-kind contributions from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Additional funds will primarily support increased fuel and vessel costs for operating surveys. For example, marine fuel costs in rural Alaska increased approximately 66 percent between 2021 and 2022, leading to an increased cost of operating the 2022 NBS survey by approximately $47,0000. Annual funding and operation are necessary for forecasts to be usable and additional funds will shore up existing programs in the face of decreasing NOAA support for marine salmon monitoring.

3. Comprehensive marine salmon monitoring: Southern Bering Sea (SBS survey) and Northwestern Gulf of Alaska (WGOA survey)

Cost: $800,000 Annually

Combined all levels will provide a comprehensive assessment of Alaskan salmon at sea for major salmon stocks. The SBS survey will include monitoring of Kuskokwim, Bristol Bay, and North Alaskan Peninsula salmon stocks. The WGOA survey will include monitoring of Cook Inlet, Copper River, and Chignik stocks, with the possibility of some Kodiak stocks also being included. Salmon surveys have previously been conducted by NOAA in these locations and have been successful.

Annual monitoring, stock assessment through genetics and otolith/CWT mark recoveries and combining with adult abundance data will enable development of forecasting tools like those already developed from NBS and SECM surveys. Combined, these four surveys will powerfully monitor future salmon runs of importance to Alaskans and allow for better analysis of factors driving Alaskan salmon run abundance patterns.

Program costs will largely include funds necessary to charter capable fishing vessels, travel, gear, supplies, laboratory analysis, and additional staffing in the field.